



**John
Kennedy**

Navy

John Kennedy

May 19, 1917 - Nov 22, 1963

BIRTHPLACE: Brookline, Massachusetts

SOLDIER DETAILS

**DIVISION: Navy, Motor Torpedo Boat Squadron
TWO**

THEATER OF OPERATION: Pacific

SERVED: Sep 25, 1941 - Feb 28, 1945

**HONORED BY: John F. Kennedy Library
Foundation**

BIOGRAPHY

John Fitzgerald Kennedy was born May 29, 1917 in Brookline, MA, to Joseph Patrick Kennedy and Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy. Named for his maternal grandfather, John Francis Fitzgerald, but known as Jack, he was the second of nine children, 4 boys and 5 girls. In 1936 he followed his older brother Joe, Jr. to Harvard. Jack was commissioned an ensign in the Naval Reserve on Sep 25, 1941 and assigned to Washington, D.C. As a Lieutenant, he was sent to Motor Torpedo Boat Squadron Two at Guadalcanal. Assuming command of PT-109 on Apr 25, 1943, Lt. Kennedy had a crew of twelve men whose mission was to stop Japanese ships from delivering supplies to their soldiers. The evening of Aug 1, 1943, his crew left Rendova Harbor to patrol the waters looking for enemy ships to sink. Suddenly, they came upon a Japanese destroyer, the Amagiri (meaning Heavenly Mist) traveling at full speed and headed straight at them. Lt. Kennedy attempted to swerve out of the way, but the much larger ship rammed PT-109, splitting it in half and killing two of his men. The others managed to jump off as their boat went up in flames. Jack was slammed hard against the cockpit, injuring his back. One of his crew members, Patrick McMahon, had terrible burns on his face and hands and wanted to give up. In the darkness, Jack found McMahon and hauled him back to where the others were clinging to a piece of the boat. At sunrise, Jack led his men toward a small island 3 miles away. Despite his own injuries, he towed McMahon ashore by clenching a strap from McMahon's life jacket between his teeth. Six days later, two native islanders found them and went for help, delivering a message Jack had carved into a piece of coconut shell. For his heroism, courage and leadership, he was awarded the Navy and Marine Corps Medal. He was then given command of PT-59 until Jan 1944, when he was sent as an instructor to the Naval Training Center in Miami, FL. After a spinal operation, he was retired from the Navy Mar 1, 1945. Jack considered becoming a teacher or writer, but his father convinced him to enter politics; he served 6 years in Congress and 8 years in the Senate. Jack was sworn in as the 35th President on Jan 20, 1961 and then assassinated on Nov 22, 1963. Other medals: Purple Heart, American Defense Service, American Campaign, Asiatic-Pacific Campaign

(with 3 bronze stars), World War II Victory. Publications: *Why England Slept*, 1940; *Profiles in Courage* (Pulitzer Prize for biography), 1957. Married Jacqueline Lee Bouvier on Sep 12, 1953.